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Dear Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee,

The Governor's budget proposal eliminates several preventive and forward thinking programs that are vital to supporting families in Middletown. While the savings to our state budget are small for each of the programs that I and my colleagues are speaking about today, the impact on the health and mental health of our families is tremendous. **Healthy Food Certification, Help Me Grow, Community Plans for Early Childhood, Early Literacy Grants, and the Parent Trust are vital to supporting families and children in this state who need our support the most. I urge you to restore funding for all of these programs.**

As the Program Planner for an Early Childhood Collaborative in Middletown I have used Help Me Grow to foster collaboration and communication between home visiting programs, like Early Head Start, and primary care providers. The service that Help Me Grow provides, access to developmental screening and referrals when delays are detected as well as a communication tool between the parent and the child's doctor, are priceless. This service is not being provided by any other agency and is helping with early detection and referral in every community across the state. It is an efficient use of a small amount of funding.

The service was not available when my first child was born but I used it when my second child was born in 2010. I was able to track her progress, notice a gross motor delay and have an honest and meaningful conversation with her doctor because we had the developmental screening score as an objective and reliable measure of her progress. I'm happy to say she continues to develop normally and my relationship with her doctor has only gotten stronger.

**Please restore funding to the Help Me Grow program.**

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Monica Belyea, MPH, RD